

# Illegal Drugs and Trafficking

Postal Inspectors report that the Internet is used in conjunction with the U.S. Mail in approximately 15 percent of its narcotics investigations. In Operation Liquid Mail, Inspectors arrested 120 customers who ordered and received illegal drugs via the Internet and U.S. Mail at 84 locations across the country.

The Postal Inspection Service interdicts mailings of illegal drugs and drug proceeds to protect postal employees from the violence often related to drug trafficking

and to preserve the integrity of the U.S. Mail. Working in concert with other law enforcement agencies, Postal Inspectors arrested 1,385 individuals this fiscal year for drug trafficking and money laundering via the U.S. Mail. Seizures from the mail included roughly 4,888 pounds of illegal narcotics and approximately 770,644 units of steroids. Postal Inspection Service investigations also resulted in the seizure of about \$1.6 million in cash and monetary instruments, five vehicles, and 66 firearms.

Postal Inspectors from New York and agents from the Drug Enforcement Agency and other state, local, and federal law enforcement agencies initiated Operation Liquid Mail, an investigation that began in January 2002 of the activities of a Canadian man who was trafficking large quantities of GBL (gamma-butyrolactone) via the U.S. Mail and the Internet. GBL is used to manufacture GHB (gamma hydroxybutyric acid), a central nervous system depressant banned by the Food and Drug Administration in 1990 and commonly referred to as the "date rape" drug; it can result in unconsciousness, seizures, severe respiratory depression, or coma. The man set up Web sites to process orders for the drug, which he mailed to customers around the world, collecting several millions of dollars in revenue. Investigators arrested him in Quebec on September 18, 2002, at which time they seized from him banking records and two computers. A search of a related warehouse resulted in the recovery of 605 gallons of GBL, 55 gallons of 1,4 butanediol, 350 cases of 1,3 butanediol, and 600 pounds of potassium hydrochloride. Postal Inspectors also identified and arrested 120 of the man's business customers at 84 locations across the country.

The following paragraphs are examples of other Postal Inspection Service investigations of illegal drug trafficking via the mail in FY 2002.

■ Postal Inspectors and San Diego Narcotics Task Force agents arrested a man on May 16, 2002, for distributing anabolic steroids, ketamine, and other controlled substances via the U.S. Mail. The suspect advertised products and received orders via the Internet and then distributed the products by Express Mail or Priority Mail. He allegedly distributed approximately \$5,000 worth of controlled substances per day to more than 300 customers across the country.

■ On May 22, 2002, Postal Inspectors and agents from the Marietta-Cobb-Smyrna (MCS) Narcotics Unit and U.S. Customs arrested a man for selling illegal steroids over the Internet and distributing them via the U.S. Mail. The defendant rented several addresses at a commercial mail receiving agency (CMRA) in Marietta, Georgia, allegedly in order to traffic illegal narcotics to other addresses, including a CMRA in San Diego. The Postal Inspection Service's Computer Forensics staff ana-

lyzed evidence seized under warrant from the suspect's residence and alleged that each of his customers generally placed orders exceeding \$2,000 for the steroids.

■ On October 3, 2001, two men were sentenced for their roles in distributing eight pounds of crack cocaine and nine pounds of heroin from Vallejo, California, to Rock Island, Illinois, via Express Mail. The men were sentenced to 27 years and 22 years, respectively, in federal prison. They hid the narcotics in vacuum-sealed cans of tuna fish before mailing them. During the execution of a search warrant by Postal Inspectors and Rock Island narcotics officers, one of the men tried to elude capture by jumping out of a second-story apartment window. He broke both his legs in the fall, and was admitted to a secured unit in a local hospital. After receiving medical attention, the man escaped from the secured unit and remained a fugitive for over two years before being located and arrested in Omaha, Nebraska.

■ In December 2001, a Des Moines, Iowa, man was sentenced to 25 years in federal prison for orchestrating a scheme to distribute methamphetamine and narcotics proceeds through the U.S. Mail. An investigation by Postal Inspectors led to the disruption of a ring of six suspects who conspired to distribute approximately 30 pounds of methamphetamine throughout the Midwest. Four others in the ring received federal sentences ranging from four to 17 years in prison. A sixth member of the ring remains an international fugitive.

■ Postal Inspectors in St. Louis, Missouri, concluded a two-year

investigation in February 2002 of four men responsible for distributing more than 40 pounds of cocaine and narcotics proceeds via the U.S. Mail and other private couriers. During the course of the investigation, Inspectors seized \$111,000 in cash, five weapons, bulletproof vests, and fake police insignia used by the group. The men relied on a local business to conceal their transactions. They were sentenced to federal terms ranging from four to 10 years in prison.

■ A three-year investigation of a major, multistate drug distribution ring investigated by the U.S. Postal Inspection Service and the Jackson County, Missouri, Drug Task Force concluded in FY 2002. The ringleader orchestrated the distribution of 100 pounds of methamphetamine and other narcotics in the Kansas City area. Ring members transported the drugs from Los Angeles via Express Mail



Postal Inspectors in Philadelphia and Los Angeles initiated an investigation in June 2002 of two Philadelphia brothers who were distributing methamphetamine via Express Mail between the two cities. Inspectors discovered the men were secreting methamphetamine inside caulk tubes and transporting the tubes to Philadelphia via Express Mail. As with many drug networks, dealers used the U.S. Mail along with other transportation methods to distribute narcotics and narcotics proceeds. After taking the brothers into custody, Inspectors identified their conspirators who drove the methamphetamine from Winston-Salem, North Carolina, to Philadelphia. Inspectors additionally arrested another two conspirators and seized 26 pounds of methamphetamine secreted in two tires in the back of their vehicle; more of the illegal drug was found hidden in the motor housing of the windshield wipers.

and Federal Express to addresses in Missouri and Kansas. Twenty suspects were indicted as a result of the investigation, and all pled guilty in federal court, receiving sentences ranging from five to 17 years in prison.

■ On May 16, 2002, four Illinois men were indicted on charges of conspiracy to deliver controlled substances. The four were arrested one month earlier when they attempted to sell approximately 86 grams of methamphetamine to an undercover Postal Inspector assigned to the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) Designer Drug Task Force. In conjunction with three other arrests in October 2001 and another in December 2001, this latest group of arrests marked the end of a Filipino ring that had been distributing crystal methamphetamine in Chicago. The ring used various methods, including U.S. Mail, private couriers, and body carriers to distribute and transport the illegal drugs. The methamphetamine was produced in the Philippines and Mexico and then smuggled into the United States. Distributors in Las Vegas and California brought the drugs to the Chicago area for distribution and sale.

## Employee Drug Investigations

Postal Inspectors investigate the selling of narcotics by postal employees while on postal property or on duty. Information on the possession or personal use of illegal drugs by postal employees is referred through postal management to the Employee Assistance Program

for attention. In FY 2002, Postal Inspectors arrested 34 postal employees suspected of possessing or using illegal drugs on duty, and 24 employees were removed from the Postal Service.

Following are examples of Postal Inspection Service investigations of narcotics-related offenses by postal employees during FY 2002.

■ Postal Service managers requested Inspectors' assistance in addressing suspected illegal narcotics activity by employees at the Englewood Station in Chicago, Illinois. A subsequent investigation resulted in the arrests of three postal employees and an accomplice. A letter carrier was placed on emergency suspension from postal duties following his arrest on May 16 for distributing a controlled substance. Two mail handlers were also arrested and suspended, and the outside accomplice was arrested.

■ Following a two-year investigation by Postal Inspectors, a former postal supervisor, who was an "acting" postmaster in Massachusetts, was sentenced in January 2002 to eight years and one month in prison and four years' supervised release. Inspectors determined that, between 1990 and 1998, the former employee opened post office boxes for the purpose of receiving marijuana through the mail. Each package weighed between 20 and 30 pounds.

Postal Inspectors use surveillance cameras to identify customers suspected of mailing prohibited items, including illegal drugs, via Express Mail.

